



Special Joint Meeting Minutes
McDowell Sonoran Preserve Commission
Parks and Recreation Commission
Wednesday, February 2, 2005
Mountain View Park Community Center
8625 E. Mountain View Road

Commissioner Members Present:

Preserve: Chairperson Art DeCabooter, Vice-chair Christine Kovach, Commissioners Carla, Dennis Carr, Howard Myers, Arnold Roy, and Solange Whitehead

Absent: Commissioners Erik Filsinger, Laura Fisher, Virginia Korte, and Donald Ruff

Parks and Recreation: Chairperson Donn Loper, Vice-chair Dean Cerimeli, Commissioners Shelley Anderson, John Faramelli, and Ron King

Absent: Commissioners Kemp Ellis and Stephen Owens

Staff Present: Bob Cafarella, Leslie Clark, Jona Davis, Scott Hamilton, Liz Hildenbrand, Christy Hill, James Ingham, Jeanne Jones, Brett Jackson, Erin McKallor-Quill, Claire Miller, Gary Meyer, William Murphy, Doug Nesselroad, Reed Pryor, Judy Weiss, and Rose Williams

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Preserve Commission Chairperson DeCabooter called the meeting to order at 5:10 pm. The Commissioners and staff introduced themselves.

Bob Cafarella, Director of Preservation, noted that items 2 and 3 on the agenda would be combined into one presentation.

CONCEPTUAL PLAN FOR THE LOST DOG WASH ACCESS AREA IN THE MCDOWELL SONORAN PRESERVE AND SCHEDULE FOR PLANNED PRESERVE IMPROVEMENTS

Bob Cafarella, Director of Preservation, gave an overview of the history of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. He outlined the both in-progress and upcoming projects and access routes and the plan for the next 5 years. Sunrise Trailhead is scheduled to open in March May 2005; Lost Dog Wash will open by the end of the year with additional access areas opening following that. Wingate Trail is under construction but won't open until the Gateway access area opens. Preservation of the resource is most critical. Phil Weddle, Weddle and Associates, gave an overview of the design and advised work is being completed on the schematics for Lost Dog Wash. An open house was held last week with good feedback. The design will be submitted to Development Review next week.

Vice-chair Kovach asked if there would be electricity to the gates. Mr. Weddle said they were investigating the possibility of using solar power. If that cannot be accomplished then electricity will have to be run to the site.

Commissioner Myers asked what was used as a basis for the amount of parking. Mr. Cafarella said staff used a number of analyses. They looked at Pinnacle Peak as a comparison for peak usage times. The analysis that was performed for Sunrise assisted in defining the amount and type of parking that would be needed. Staff also did projections, and determined 100 spaces will probably be adequate for between 4

to 10 years. It may become necessary at that time to look at more spaces. The way this parking area is designed, future improvements won't impact the existing users when more parking is constructed. Mr. Myers noted that Pinnacle Peak is too small with no room to expand. Is there any additional room for more than 300 spaces. Mr. Cafarella said there is no plan to go beyond 300 spaces. The Preserve Access Area Report says the top limit should be about 300 spaces for major community access areas. Pinnacle Peak is a very unique amenity and is an exercise climbing experience. Lost Dog Wash will be more of a hiking experience. Mr. Myers asked if there would be any place in the park for school buses. Mr. Weddle said this would be an offset with equestrian use times, so that parking area could be used for busses. Mr. Myers said he didn't like the idea of using that as bus staging as they may conflict in time with equestrian users. Mr. Cafarella said school uses will be during the week and staff believes there will be ample capacity during the week. The Gateway will be the principle focus for educational elements when it is completed. If there are issues during the weekend, there is more flexibility in using the parking at with Anasazi School. Mr. Weddle said the guidelines indicated that 300 spaces should be ample parking. There is space available in the buffer area and along the wash if more parking needed to be constructed, but the plan avoids that because of the visibility. Commissioner Carla noted that school buses don't stay where they drop the children off. They go elsewhere to park. Vice-chair Kovach asked if there would be signage for the location of the overflow parking and would parking be allowed on the street. Mr. Cafarella said it is a City street with a bike lane so there would be no parking on the street. Overflow parking would be directed to the school on the weekends, or to 128th Street, and then to McDowell Mountain Ranch. In a year overflow parking can also be at the Gateway. Vice-chair Kovach asked if parking is currently allowed on 124th Street. Mr. Cafarella said it would be dangerous and there are No Parking signs there already. Mr. Weddle said a quick solution would be grading along the entry drive providing about 36 spaces.

Commissioner Whitehead noted we don't want too many people in there.

Commissioner Carr asked what bicycle facilities are there. Mr. Weddle said, in the first phase, there will be 5 to 10 spaces and that would expand to a maximum of 30 spaces when the parking is expanded. Commissioner Carr asked if the site for the bikes is at the low end. Mr. Weddle said the trail comes up the wash and along 124th Street with 3 routes for people to enter. Mr. Cafarella said nothing will change at 128th Street. Further restricted parking may be added in that area. Commissioner Carr asked if there is any plan for a trail from 124th Street to 128th Street. Mr. Cafarella said there is a trail that goes along the south boundary.

Vice-chair Kovach noted one concern at open house was the multi-use element of the trails. All the users are funneled into one section of the trail. The concern was sharing one section might be difficult. Staff may need to look at other trails to spread out the uses. Mr. Weddle said there is a connection across to the south side of Lost Dog Wash. All users are on the same trail for about 1,000 feet. Mr. Cafarella said the south trail is a bypass around the access area completely. Staff will keep an eye on that issue.

Commissioner Faramelli asked if there is an overview on how we program the trails. Mr. Cafarella said this area is on a first- come first-serve basis. There is no process for reservations. Commercial groups do not get a preference. Commissioner Faramelli asked if this was an all day experience. Mr. Cafarella said there is an opportunity to make the hike as long or as short as you like. The Preserve is only open during daylight hours. With other access areas there is an opportunity to do a short loop or build on that and go all the way to Dynamite Road. Commissioner Faramelli asked if there will be cooking facilities. Mr. Cafarella said there would be no cooking facilities. Staff did additional analyses and the decision was made not to do that. The door is still open at the Gateway for that type of amenity. Commissioner Faramelli noted this is a passive area and we have to be careful with how we approach the number of users, the hours of operation, and things like cooking facilities. He noted users may get frustrated with limited parking and encourages a system to redirect to users to other points. Some trailheads could be a better experience than others. Mr. Cafarella said he doesn't think the frustration will happen. The entire site will be interconnected eventually so you can get that ultimate experience. Commissioner Faramelli asked if the site will have to have some power. Mr. Weddle said it would if the use of solar power to

operate the gate cannot be accomplished. Commissioner Faramelli asked if maintenance of solar type equipment will be by staff. Mr. Cafarella said it would be. If power becomes an issue, then a contractor may be hired to open and close the gate, or we will continue the partnership with the McDowell Sonoran Land Trust. Commissioner Faramelli noted he likes the idea of decomposed granite for the site.

Commissioner Anderson asked if literature will be provided with phone numbers to call if there are issues with parking such as cars in equestrian spaces. Mr. Cafarella said the site will not be totally unattended. During peak times of the year there is going to be preserve stewards there and possibly some staff on weekends. Users can call staff and advise them of rides and staff will work to ensure the area is set aside. Commissioner Anderson asked if there will be a phone number available. Mr. Cafarella said the Trails Plan Map has phone numbers and e-mail addresses. Commissioner Anderson asked if signage will be posted to ask users to clean up manure and are there any other trash containers. Mr. Weddle said there are smaller containers throughout the lots. Commissioner Anderson asked how much room was around the site along the road for another trailer to drive by. Mr. Weddle said the lane is 24-feet wide in the drive lane and that is enough for 2-way circulation but we are limiting it to one-way.

Vice-chair Cerimeli asked how many trails start at the trailhead. Scott Hamilton, Trails Planner, said there are 2 into the Preserve and 2 out of the Preserve. Vice-chair Cerimeli asked how many users are expected annually. Mr. Cafarella said in the early years about 15,000 to 20,000. Vice-chair Cerimeli asked what is distance between this trailhead and the one in Fountain Hills. Claire Miller, Preserve Manager, said about 4 miles on the road.

Commissioner King asked how do the projections compare to the Phoenix usages. Mr. Cafarella said he went by the 40th Street parking area south of Shea daily at different times. At no time were there more than 40 to 50 cars. He visited the 7th Street and Thunderbird lot on weekends and there were a few times during peak winter months when the lot was full. Staff is comfortable with the 100 spaces. Commissioner King noted he feels the 100 spaces will be adequate. Commissioner King asked the width of the trail. Mr. Hamilton said the first part is an old Jeep road about 8 to 10 feet wide and it narrows down to 3 to 4 feet.

Commissioner Faramelli asked how wide the bridge was that crosses 124th Street. Mr. Weddle said it was 1 lane each direction with a bicycle lane and sidewalk on each side. Commissioner Faramelli asked does it need to be that wide. Mr. Cafarella said for the safety of bikers and pedestrians, staff felt it should be this wide.

Chairperson Loper noted this is a long time coming and is needed. He asked if signs will be installed on Via Linda and would they be the standard park signage. Mr. Cafarella noted no signs will be installed until the site is constructed. The City's Transportation Department will determine the type of sign as they are responsible for public street signs. Chairperson Loper asked what was the elevation of the parking area relative to the wash. Mr. Weddle said the contours are straight across, and the wash is probably 2 to 3 feet deep. Chairperson Loper asked if the issue of erosion coming from mountain to the parking area had been addressed. Mr. Weddle said there are 2 drainage paths to collect drainage. Chairperson Loper asked if there would be any lighting. Mr. Weddle said there would be low-level lighting in the parking area. There won't be any bollard or pole lights at the site. Chairperson Loper asked for an explanation of compost. Mr. Weddle said it is a natural decomposition process and is used frequently in the National Parks System. Chairperson Loper asked what condition will cause a decision be made to increase the size of the parking area. Mr. Cafarella said trail counters will be installed, staff will frequent the site and the MSLT will be there constantly. We need to gain our own experience in this and be ready to respond. Chairperson Loper asked what is the lead-time between the decision and the construction. Mr. Cafarella said all the approvals will be in order for up to 300 spaces, the money is there, so it would need to go to bid, then to contract and construction with completion probably within a year. Mr. Weddle noted that the only other approval necessary would be the permit process. Chairperson Loper asked if all the groundwork that can be laid for more parking has been laid. Mr. Weddle said it has been. Mr. Cafarella said there would be no disruption of the facility while improvements are being made. Chairperson Loper

asked what was the distance to the farthest point, 10 to 11 miles. Mr. Hamilton said it is farther than that. Chairperson Loper asked if there is a rescue agreement. Mr. Cafarella said as a part of the Public Safety Tax initiative, funding is available for a unit for the parks and preserve. Staff is working with that group to bring them up to speed. There will be a GPS System in place so they will know where someone is. The MSLT has sent people through a college class to learn about these types of events and they are trained to know what to do. We have lots of work to do but all the ingredients are being put in place. Chairperson Loper asked what anticipate staff is required for policing. Mr. Cafarella said the police department is working on scoping how many officers would be needed. The Preserve staff is limited but there are 100 trained volunteers that we rely on. Commissioner Carla noted 100 volunteers logged 7,500 hours last year and we expect that to double. We are assessing how many volunteers will be needed. We may create pathfinders trained to stay at the trailhead. We are doing this on a parallel track with the development of the Preserve.

Commissioner Anderson asked if staff expects to have a problem with 4-wheelers like there is along Dynamite. Mr. Cafarella noted that the area along Dynamite is State land and people can get permits to 4-wheel. Ms. Miller works closely with the State to educate them on the abuse. We don't anticipate this being a problem for the Preserve.

Commissioner Comments and Public Comments

There were none.

ADJOURNMENT OF JOINT MEETING

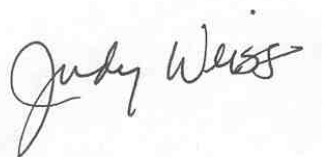
Commissioner Carla moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Roy seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

With no further business to be brought before the Commission, Chairperson DeCabooter adjourned the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

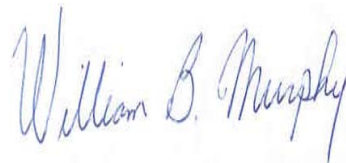
Respectfully submitted by Ruth Johnson, Recording Secretary.

Meets established criteria.

Robert Cafarella
Director
Preservation



Judy Weiss
Director
Parks & Recreation



William B. Murphy
Director
Parks & Grounds Management